



The San Francisco Bay Area Network Inventory and Monitoring Program tracks the status and trends of the region's natural resources in order to improve park management through greater reliance on scientific knowledge.

Project Highlights – April 2007

Elephant Seal Productivity linked to Oceanographic Conditions in 2007

Northern elephant seals recolonized Point Reyes National Seashore (PORE) in 1981 and since then the colony has grown exponentially. Early last fall, the NOAA Weather Service predicted that 2006-07 would be an El Nino/Southern Oscillation (ENSO)



year. Early indications that the elephant seals might be affected by the ENSO were: a slow start to the season with the first pup born on December 19th, the low number of females returning to breed in 2007, and the seasonal peak count of females at PORE (@640) did not increase from last year. Over the past 25 years, the PORE colony growth rate has stalled or declined only during ENSO events or very stormy years. In a sudden reversal, NOAA revised their prediction mid-way through the season, and indeed, the very rainy season normally associated with ENSO events failed to occur. Instead, January

and February were unseasonably dry, and consequently, there was minimal pup mortality. As a result, a very large number of pups survived to weaning, with a breeding season total of 625. Annual mortality rates are average around 20%, but can be as high as 80% during strong ENSO events. This year at Point Reyes, the pup mortality rate was around 15%. A few females gave birth in new areas within the headlands, expanding onto adjacent beaches.

Early Detection Updates

Thanks to a garden club talk by Ellen Hamingson, the "Inverness Irregulars" group will begin surveys for invasive plant species during their weekly hikes at Point Reyes. Weed identification cards for priority species are in the works, to complement the very popular cards produced by I&M for Golden Gate (http://www1.nature.nps.gov/im/units/sfan/vital_signs/Invasives/ID_cards.cfm) Weed Watcher surveys at Golden Gate continue every Sunday and Tuesday through the end of summer; contact Elizabeth Speith (espeith@parksconservancy.org or 415-331-5023).

Links of Interest:

eBird

This new website (<http://ebird.org/Klamath-Siskiyou/>) allows community members to log their important bird sightings into a national database used by scientists and the public. You can check out which birds are in your area, make maps and graphs from your data, and contribute to important bird monitoring efforts. Many areas in California are already included such as the Marin Headlands or Point Reyes.

Confronting Climate Change in California: This website sponsored by the Union of Concerned Scientists provides information about possible effects of climate change in California:

http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science/confronting-climate-change-in-california.html